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ABSTRACT

Teach for America is a national teacher corps of outstanding individuals who commit 2 years to teach in urban and rural areas experiencing persistent teacher shortages. Teach for America selects corps members through an intensive application process, prepares them to enter the classroom in a preservice institute, clusters them in placement sites, and establishes local offices in these areas to arrange for ongoing support and professional development. Ongoing professional development takes the form of support groups, workshops, and university or district programs that result in certification. This program summary discusses goals, history, recruitment, selection, placement, professional development, outreach and corps member support, evaluation, and program funding. Also included is a profile of corps members. (IAH)

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TEACH FOR AMERICA

Program Summary 1991-92

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GOALS

Teach For America provides highly motivated individuals who did not major in education the opportunity to teach in public schools. We aim to train and support them in such a way that their years of teaching will have a positive impact on the children they teach and on their own commitment to America's educational system. Thus, in the short run, we mitigate persistent teacher shortages with a pool of energetic, creative teachers. In the long run, we hope to address the human resources issue of education in fundamental ways:

- By elevating the image of teaching, by showing the American public that thousands of outstanding individuals compete to enter the profession and find it challenging and rewarding;
- By making a significant contribution to the fields of teacher selection, training, support and certification;
- By focusing positive attention and additional resources on the public school systems in each of the communities where we place corps members;
- By working with states, universities and districts on a local level to effect systemwide programmatic and certification-based change in teacher training and support; and
- By creating a corps that will have the experience and commitment to be powerful advocates for educational restructuring, improvement, and teacher professionalization.

As Teach For America grows and gains experience and exposure, we believe that we will become more involved in two additional arenas. We aim to work actively with districts, corporations, and universities to develop new models for the teaching profession that could increase the retention of outstanding people in teaching. Also, we are just beginning to explore the potential for Teach For America and its corps members to work with states and cities as they undertake fundamental restructuring.

Program Overview

Teach For America recruits outstanding graduating seniors at 172 colleges and universities, although anyone with a B.A. degree can apply to the program. All applicants complete a written essay application, a sample teaching session, and two interviews. Recruiters recommend those applicants who demonstrate commitment, flexibility, professionalism, leadership, an engaging and effective communication style, and an educational approach consisting of high expectations for all students and sensitivity to diversity of student backgrounds and learning styles.

Those individuals who are recommended for acceptance are placed in one of Teach For America's sites. In 1991, Teach For America will place corps members in New York City, Newark, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Miami, Oakland, and Houston, and in rural areas in Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, and North Carolina. Districts in these areas are experiencing persistent teacher shortages and hire corps members as full teachers through existing alternative certification mechanisms.

Corps members participate in a two-year program of professional development which begins with an eight week pre-service institute during the summer prior to their placement. This institute includes a six week national component which revolves around student-teaching in Los Angeles' year-round schools and a two week on-site induction to the schools and communities in which corps members will be teaching. The institute, staffed by a faculty comprised mostly of active teachers from our placement sites, aims to provide corps members with the practical skills and the theoretical background they need to enter the classroom.

Ongoing professional development is fostered through support groups, workshops, and university programs. The institute faculty members work part-time throughout the academic year and facilitate support groups which meet regularly. Teach For America also sponsors workshops to respond to the concerns and needs of corps members, and we work with local universities, districts, and states to develop credit-bearing programs which enable corps members to move towards full certification.

In each placement site, Teach For America has a local office which provides corps members with transitional help and ongoing direct support. Local offices also work with school districts, local universities, corporations and foundations, community organizations, and states to effect systemwide changes that will impact upon all teachers.

History

In the fall of 1988, student and business leaders gathered in San Francisco to develop action plans for the improvement of the educational system. Because many of the student participants – selected through a rigorous application process as some of the most highly motivated young people in the country – were expressing the desire to teach, one of the action plan groups proposed the creation of a domestic "teacher corps."

Wendy Kopp, then a senior at Princeton University, was a member of that group. She developed the concept of a teacher corps in her 170-page thesis which examined the need for teachers, the policy context in which the corps would operate, the feasibility of such an organization, and the experience of similar organizations such as the Peace Corps, VISTA, and President Johnson's Teacher Corps.

Initial funding from the Mobil Foundation and from Union Carbide Corporation enabled Wendy to spend the summer after graduation developing plans and laying the foundation for the organization by speaking with business and education leaders. A team of recent college graduates came together beginning in September of 1989 to take Teach For America from idea to reality.

In December of 1989, Teach For America brought together student leaders from each of 100 college campuses to motivate and organize them to promote Teach For America on their campuses. Word about Teach For America first hit college campuses in January of 1990, and we had generated 2500 applications by April. From that pool, we selected 500 charter corps members who then participated in the first Teach For America Institute during the summer of 1990 and entered schools in six sites the following fall.

Today, 53 full-time staff and more than 100 student volunteers around the country are working together to operate a careful mechanism of recruitment and selection, placement, training and support.

Recruitment

Teach For America recruits outstanding graduating seniors who have strong academic backgrounds and are leaders on their campuses. We make a particular effort to recruit individuals for whom districts express a particular need: those who are bilingual, those who majored in math, science and foreign languages, and people of color.

Promotion

We approach each targeted campus with a three-pronged effort that is designed to encourage college students to think of teaching as a viable career option:

- *Student leaders* volunteer to be our campus representatives and work to encourage college students to get involved in local public schools.
- *Faculty representatives* motivate and organize other faculty members to encourage their students to consider teaching at elementary and secondary levels.
- *Teach For America recruiters* visit student organizations and career service offices to present Teach For America and recruit outstanding students to apply.

Schools

Teach For America actively recruits at 172 colleges and universities, selected according to a variety of measures including size, selectivity, and minority enrollment.

Selection

During the months of February and March, 14 Teach For America recruiters travel in pairs to different regions around the country to select corps members. Recruiters have experience in teaching or in education in urban or rural areas, and they are trained during an intensive month-long session in January.

Application Process

Applicants complete a four-stage application process:

- Written essay application with three written references
- Sample teaching session
- Interview #1
- Interview #2

Criteria for Acceptance

Teach For America seeks individuals who demonstrate the following characteristics:

- A high level of commitment, as demonstrated through excellence in academics, work experience, and extracurriculars
- Flexibility
- Leadership
- Maturity
- An engaging and effective communication style
- An educational approach consisting of high expectations for all students and a sensitivity to diversity in terms of student backgrounds and learning styles

PLACEMENT

Teach For America places exclusively in districts experiencing persistent teacher shortages. These districts tend to be in inner-city and remote rural areas. Placement sites are chosen based on the extent of their need and their willingness to support Teach For America and its corps members.

CERTIFICATION

School districts with teacher shortages have existing mechanisms to hire individuals who are not fully certified. Teach For America corps members teach through these mechanisms and work toward certification during their two years with Teach For America.

SALARIES

School districts hire corps members at regular first-year teacher salaries which range from $15,000 to $29,000, with the national average just over $25,000.

SITES

	1990-91	*1991-92*
Rural Arkansas		18
Baton Rouge	20	32
Rural Georgia	11	20
Houston		150
Los Angeles	206	235
Rural Louisiana		75
Miami		56
New York City	177	20
New Orleans	45	70
Rural North Carolina	30	47
Oakland		30
Rural Texas		30
TOTAL	**489**	**783***

* This number is a projection and does not include corps members who were initially placed in 1990, and who retain teaching positions for a minimum of two years. Some New York City corps members who assumed positions in 1990 will be transferred to other sites due to the fiscal crisis and resulting teacher lay-offs.

Professional Development

Teach For America operates on the premise that effective teachers are best made through experience, reflection, and ongoing professional development. A pre-service institute prepares corps members to enter classrooms in diverse urban or rural environments and to begin the journey towards becoming effective teachers. Ongoing professional development takes the form of support groups, workshops, and university or district programs that result in certification.

The Deans Council

This group of educators defines the curriculum and structure of our eight-week summer institute, as well as the goals and general construct of our ongoing professional development programs. The Council is a group of five collaborating educators:

George F. Garda, Ed. D	Former Superintendent, Kansas City
Marcia V. Lyles, MA	Principal, Paul Robeson High School, New York City
Paul Nash, Ed. D	Former Professor, History and Philosophy of Education
Sylvia Peters, MA	Principal, Alexandre Dumas Elementary, Chicago
Greta Pruitt, Ed. D	Principal, 32nd Street Magnet, Los Angeles

Faculty

Our faculty is comprised almost wholly of active teachers from our placement sites, and some university educators provide added expertise in specific curriculum areas. The active teachers serve as full-time faculty during the summer and as ongoing support facilitators throughout the year. As institute faculty, they lead mentor groups of 10-12 corps members in discussions designed to further their personal and professional development, and they also collaborate with each other to teach classes in pedagogy and curriculum. As support facilitators, they lead support groups that meet throughout the two years.

The Portfolio

Corps members produce a portfolio which includes case studies, sample lesson plans, video-taped teaching samples, and so on. The portfolio is meant to act as an assessment mechanism, to encourage reflection, and to document the individual's progression along the path toward becoming an expert teacher. Corps members are expected to produce components of the Portfolio during the institute and, depending on local arrangements for ongoing professional development, at certain points during the two years.

Institute

Corps members participate in an eight week institute during the summer prior to their placement as first-year teachers. Six weeks take place in Los Angeles, and two weeks in the local placement sites. During this first six weeks, corps members student teach each morning in the Los Angeles Schools, and in the afternoon the faculty provides instruction in pedagogy and curriculum. In this way, the centralized component of the institute is designed to blend practical tools with meaningful, theoretical underpinnings. Workshops and speakers add insight on specific issues. The two week site-based induction orients corps members to the communities, districts and schools in which they will be working.

Support Groups

Support groups provide corps members with a responsive and flexible support system as well as a mechanism for both ongoing professional development and social interaction. They meet at least once a month and more often during the teachers' first months in the classroom. In metropolitan areas, groups range in size from 10-15 corps members and are divided according to grade level and subject area when possible. In rural districts, assignments are often subject to geographic constraints.

Workshops

Each local office sponsors at least one workshop per month during which local and national educational organizations, teacher unions, and universities give presentations designed to address specific classroom issues and to introduce corps members to available outside resources. Workshops usually take place on weekends or after school hours during the week.

University & District Certification Programs

Teach For America works with local universities, districts and states to construct programs which can result in full certification and move corps members further toward becoming an expert teacher. Given that local institutions and constraints vary widely, certification programs vary by location. Teach For America works in each area to construct programs that are integrated with the pre-service institute and with the other components of ongoing professional development.

Second Summer

A one-week reunion between the first and second years serves to re-energize corps members and to expose them to new ideas in education. The week provides opportunities for structured reflection in which corps members, drawing from their own experiences, work with each other to determine what makes a good teacher and what they hope to accomplish in their second year of teaching. They have an opportunity to share ideas and lesson plans with one another.

Outreach & Corps Member Support

Teach For America has local offices in each of the areas in which it places corps members. These offices work to arrange site-based ongoing professional development activities, and they perform a number of additional functions:

Transitional Support & Orientation

Corps members are making a difficult transition – usually from college to the "real world," often to a new and very different environment and culture, and generally to exceptionally difficult working environments. Teach For America works to ease this transition in a number of ways:

- *Orientation.* In order to ensure that Teach For America corps members are entering supportive teaching situations, we establish relationships with the principals of their schools and make sure that the faculty in those schools understand Teach For America. In addition, local offices arrange for corps members to receive an orientation to their communities and school districts during the induction component of the institute.
- *Housing.* We provide guidance in locating affordable housing. Most corps members share apartments or houses with each other, which acts as an additional support device.
- *Loans.* We help corps members obtain short-term loans.

Ongoing Direct Support

Local Teach For America staff work to ensure that corps members receive effective support throughout their two years. Through their relationships with principals and mentor teachers, local staff ensure the existence of in-school support. They work with support facilitators and universities to ensure that ongoing professional development programs are relevant and responsive to the corps members' needs. They act as resources for the corps through office hours and school visits, and they arrange for additional support mechanisms such as local newsletters and social events.

External Relations

Teach For America establishes ongoing relationships with state departments of education, school districts, local corporations and foundations, local media, colleges and universities, unions, and other local organizations. We aim to work with these organizations to focus more attention and resources on local public schools, and to help improve local mechanisms for teacher selection, certification, support and professional development.

Evaluation

Teach For America relies on internal and external mechanisms for evaluation. Internally, our Director of Research and Evaluation provides concrete data about the strengths and weaknesses of various components of the program, and ensures that we learn from similar initiatives and from current research. The goal of this research and evaluation effort is to strengthen internal program development, as well as our ability to contribute to existing knowledge regarding the recruitment, selection, training and support of teachers.

Externally, we have contracted with the University of Wisconsin Center for Education Research to conduct a three-year study of Teach For America. Thomas S. Popkewitz, Professor of Education at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, is the Project Director of this evaluation. Dr. Popkewitz began collecting data during the first summer institute and will follow selected corps members throughout the two years. He is looking at how corps members impact their environments as well as how these environments impact corps members, and he seeks to determine where Teach For America fits into the context of schooling and education reform in urban and rural areas.

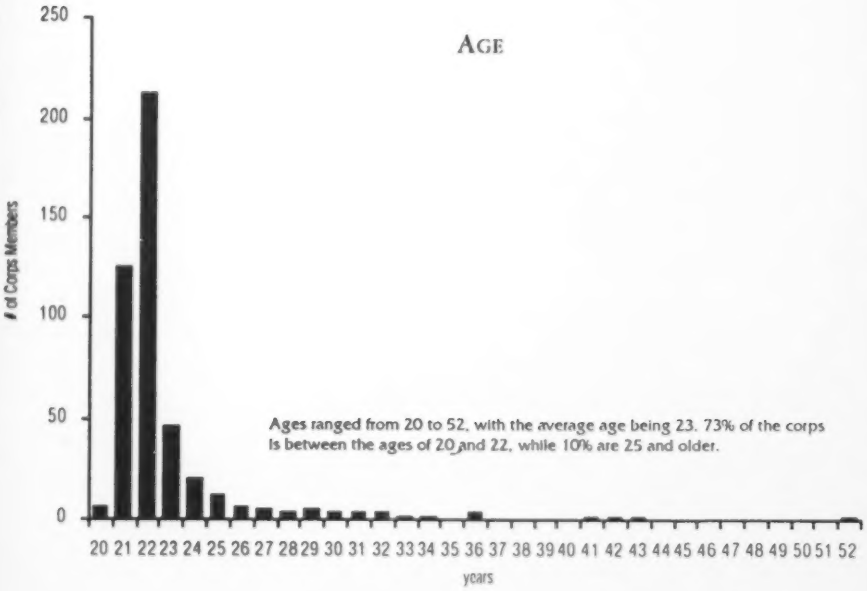
Dissemination

Dissemination of evaluation data will occur through two primary mechanisms:

1. Tom Popkewitz will produce mid-year reports and a book at the end of the three years.
2. Teach For America will publish its own findings in education journals.

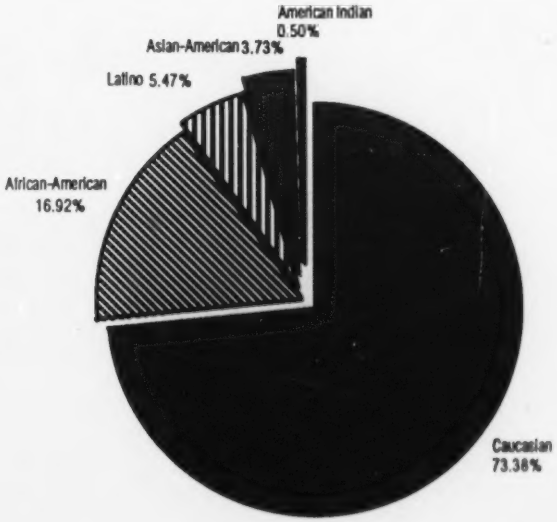
Corps Member Profile

A survey of the 505 charter corps members (CMs) conducted at the 1990 Summer Training Institute revealed these statistics based on a 93% response rate. Some demographic information was taken from the corps members' matriculation packets.


Age
250
200
150
100
50
0
# of Corps Members
Ages ranged from 20 to 52, with the average age being 23. 73% of the corps is between the ages of 20 and 22, while 10% are 25 and older.
20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52
years

GENDER

ETHNICITY



The 20 Colleges Most Highly Attended by Corps Members

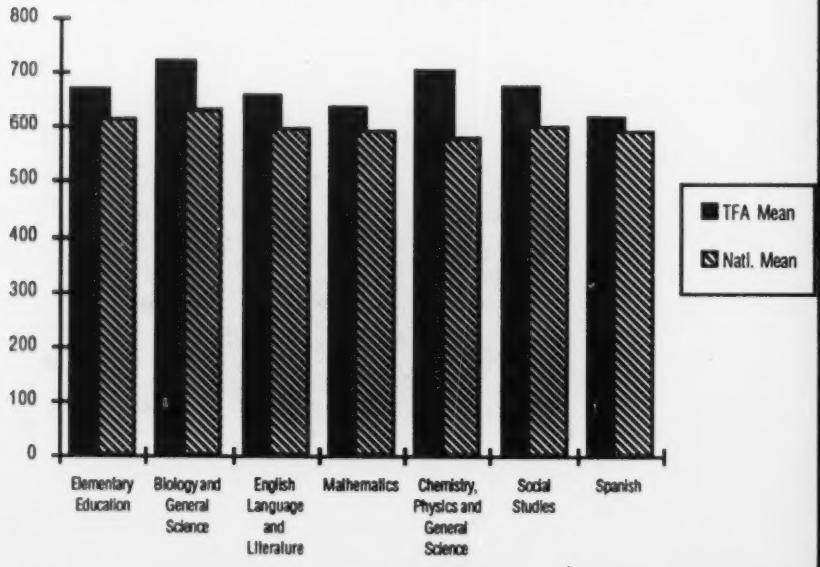
Yale	28	Williams	10
University of Michigan	14	SUNY Binghamton	10
Princeton	13	Emory	9
Tufts	13	University of Minnesota	9
University of Wisconsin	13	Boston University	8
Brown	13	Carleton	8
Cornell	11	Columbia	8
Harvard	11	University of North Carolina	8
Stanford	11	University of Virginia	8
Vanderbilt	11	William and Mary	8

Self-Reported Standardized Test Scores

Combined Average SAT scores: 1251

In 1988, Education Majors averaged 950 on the SAT

Results of the National Teachers Exam



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